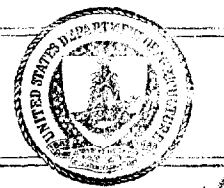


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HUNTERS SCORNING COOTS  
IN ERROR, SURVEY SHOWS

Birds Damage Rice Crop, but May  
Be Reduced in Numbers by  
Legitimate Means

Complaints from rice growers in Western States that American coots have become so abundant as to prove seriously destructive to the rice crop in some sections, and from sportsmen that these birds compete with wild ducks for food in some localities, have led the Bureau of Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture to issue the following statement regarding the coot, which is a game bird protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, administered by the bureau.

"The grievances of rice growers against the common fresh-water coot have resulted in requests to the Department of Agriculture for permission to use extraordinary measures to reduce the numbers of the bird. Shooting out of season, removing protection entirely, and wholesale destroying by various methods, including poisoning, have been suggested. It must not be forgotten, however, that the coot is a game bird protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty and that it can be legitimately reduced in numbers during open seasons merely through shooting by hunters.

"To avoid hunting the coot on the supposition that it is not good to eat is unjustifiable; coots skinned and broiled are excellent eating (and skinning them is not difficult). In many localities where wild ducks are plentiful and

are hunted by strangers, the lowly coot is prized for home consumption. Visiting hunters with mistaken ideas on the edibility of game birds, and wanting only canvas-backs and the like, are prevented by their own prejudices from even trying the coot. If sportsmen will take the legal limit of coots a few times in the season, they will have something worth while from a gastronomic viewpoint, and they will also aid in reducing to proper proportions the numbers of this species, thus tending to eliminate complaints of damage. The Federal open seasons on coots conform with those on ducks, geese, and brant for the various parts of the country; the bag limit is 25 a day.

"The coot has fallen heir to a number of derogatory names, among which the term mudhen is supposed to indicate the characteristic environment of the bird. It is called blue peter on the South Atlantic coast; crow duck in New England; poule d'eau, or puldee, in sections where the population is largely of French extraction; and by about 30 other local names, including rice hen, water hen, pond hen, marsh hen, chicken bill, and white bill.

the  
"Allegations that/bird is not a clean feeder and that its flesh tastes like the bottom of a mud hole are largely unfounded. The coot feeds more upon the green foliage of aquatic plants than do any of the wild ducks, and it consumes in addition such delicacies as the tubers of wild colery and sago pondweed and the grain of wild rice. It is in fact a cleaner feeder than many other birds and mammals eaten by man."